
A Better Way to *Fight*:

HOW TO START A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

Before

A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

Use this early and often when conflict arises.

John Gottman says, “94% of the time, the way a discussion starts determines the way it will end.”

Use a Softened Start-Up

Start the conversation off right. This means coming from a place of **understanding**, and wanting your **partner to understand you**... not from a place of anger or accusations.

To soften your start-up means to approach a conversation with **how you're feeling** about the situation, **not your perception of your partner's flaws or behavior**.

A GOOD FORMULA TO REMEMBER IS:

1

“I feel _____,”

- hurt
- abandoned
- attacked
- left out
- etc.

2

“about _____,”

*[the specific behavior,
not a pattern of behavior]*

- “when I’m not invited to virtual happy hours with your friends,”
- “when you don’t read the articles I send you,”
- “when we don’t have dinner together,”

3

“and I need _____.”

[state the positive need]

- “to know what your preferred evening schedule looks like and how I can be a part of it.”
- “to feel like you’re interested in the things I care about.”
- “to spend some quality time together this week.”

Be polite and appreciative. Just because you are in conflict with your partner doesn’t mean that your respect and affection for them has to diminish. Adding phrases such as “please” and “I appreciate it” can be helpful for maintaining respect and emotional connection during a difficult conversation.